

AUGUST 2013

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

As school gets in full swing, many teachers are starting the year out by assessing what their students already know. These assessments, or **formative assessments**, are used to inform instruction and can come in many forms including quizzes, group discussions or projects.

Formative assessments are intended to provide important feedback during the learning process and serve as a checkpoint for understanding a subject. Monitoring these benchmark scores is incredibly valuable in ensuring long term student success. Teachers, schools and districts use formative assessments to find areas where targeted instruction is needed and to help students understand the areas they need to improve on. Formative assessments are often used to pinpoint a need for remediation, additional instruction/study or even a different approach to instruction/study in a particular area.

Parents don't always see these scores, and because they likely don't play a large role in their student's grade, parents may not pay as much attention to these scores as they would a regular exam. However, parents and students can learn much from their formative assessment scores and can use these checkpoints to ensure they are on track for success in the class. The key is to know what you're looking for and to use the information you find to help spur growth in the subject. Here are some steps parents can take:

- Ask your child about what he/she is learning, and always ask to see any tests or quizzes they take;
- Ask your child's teacher to share with you any formative assessment scores;
- Make sure your child's scores grow from assessment to assessment;
 - You should see growth throughout the year/semester if your child is learning what he/she needs to know for the class
- If the scores aren't increasing, meet with their teacher about what is happening and talk about what strategies can be employed;
- Ask your child's teacher what you can be doing at home to reinforce learning in the classroom.

Assessments are more than just accountability tools used at the end of the year. They can provide critical data that can help parents and teachers better support a student through the learning process. So, don't ignore routine quizzes throughout the year. Although they might not be critical to the overall grade, they are critical to the learning process.

Sincerely,
The Arizona Ready Team